*****Very Important Platter ****Good album, hear it if you can ***Worthwhile **Dull or disappointing *Re-cycle

ALBUMS

Pic by Paul Cox/LFI

THIN LIZZY: the only thing missing is the lights

Danger—high voltage Thin Lizzy

THIN LIZZY
'Live And Dangerous'
(Vertigo)***

THE INEVITABLE ringside bickering is easy to fathom: in this corner we hear cries to the tune of "It bloody well took long enough . . ." and in that corner the predictable, "Jumping on the old live album bandwagon, eh . . .?". And while verbal punches are being thrown amongst the spectators, 'Live And Dangerous' will rise above it all like the mushroom cloud of an H-bomb, rendering the petty squabbling utterly useless.

The sheer strength of Lizzy live comes across on this album as though they have just exploded into your living room, but here you have the advantage of being able to lift your stylus and recreate the heat of your favourite songs alive, yet somehow even this does not detract from the spontaneity of the group onstage. Really, the only thing missing is the lights . . .

'Live And Dangerous' is the first live album I have ever heard that realisticly re-creates a stage show in its entirety, the only anti-climactic points being the time it takes to flip the disc over at the end of a side. It will fulfill any fan's expectations easily, and has the capacity in its higher spots to convert the more sceptical.

As the first track of an album is inevitably the one which makes the listener decide whether or not to stay listening, each of 'Live And Dangerous's' four sides begins with a gripper, respectively 'Jailbreak', 'Dancing In The Moonlight' (with saxophone), 'Cowboy Song', and 'Suicide', all of which are very effective in either rekindling or carrying on interest in the album as a whole. It is impossible to declare any side better than the others, this is strictly down to personal opinion of the songs in this case, where the actual playing is consistently impeccable.

As live albums go, especially the four-sided ones that have become so popular in the last year, 'Live And Dangerous' decidedly lacks in indulgent jams, preferring to be cram-packed with 17 different tracks. Certainly not the easy way to fill time and space, but definitely one of the characteristics that keep this album both interesting and swift moving.

Side three is my personal favourite, most simply because of the tracks, but partially due to their arrangement: 'Cowboy Song' rips straight into 'Boys Are Back In Town', precisely the way they do so in concert, but it then relaxes for the slower 'Don't Believe A Word', only to break into a pounding 'Warrior' immediately followed by a shattering 'Are You Ready'. Not at all for the weak-hearted.

Still, there is no ignoring the surprising track selection. Although all of the expected favourites are included, 'Southbound', 'Still In Love With You', 'Johnny The Fox Meets Jimmy The Weed', the fourth side is the one that really brings home the effectiveness of this as a live LP. In particular, 'Baby Drives Me Crazy' is a fond reminder of Lynott's incomparable audience rapport, something spliced out of the album (purely for the advantage of fitting in more music), and the fact that they didn't bother to patch up the break preceeding 'The Rocker' as an encore with applause (as real as it would have been), only serves to enhance the humble reality of this recorded representation of live Lizzy.

I have deliberately avoided going into the individual musicians' merits, as they speak for themselves just as they do so live. Suffice to say this is Thin Lizzy *primo-primo*, in group form.

'Live And Dangerous' was well worth waiting for, an absolutely excellent album.

DONNA McALLISTER

Bowie speaks!

(NB: This does not refer to the latest MM exclusive)

EUGENE NORMANDY AND THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
(Narration: David Bowie)
'Peter And The Wolf'
(RCA)

THE RELEVANCE of this classical record to the 'rock marketplace' is quite frankly marginal but evidently heavily counted upon by RCA in their wisdom. After all, their 'mega-star' puts his narrator's mask on for one whole side, and very nicely too. To emphasise the point, said star's phiz is plastered over the front cover, with poor Eugene relegated to the small print; the point is rammed home, and this 'product' sealed as a fully fledged 'collector's item', by the shipping of several thousand imports in *green vinyl*, with the sticker 'The Green Record' added in case you missed the *urgency*...

Mind you, such carping is reserved for current 'marketing' techniques only — which, while successful thus far, are rapidly reaching the intensity of hysteria — and shouldn't extend to the actual *music*. Briefly, for those of you who haven't encountered it lurking in your childhood closets, 'Peter And The Wolf' is a child's fairy tale (for 'children of all ages' as the ads go) which neatly doubles as a child's guide to an orchestra. The various characters in the tale — itself a decipherably simple mixture of cuteness, narrative, and enough nastiness — are each given a musical counterpart, an instrumental theme and an instrument which reappears as they do in the narrative. For instance, Peter is assigned the string quartet, the wolf the French horns, etc. The mixture of narration and music is about right, is taken, as a whole, at the right pace, and the main theme (Peter's) is simply very catchy.

In which our hero self-effaces and narrates in clipped, resonating and colourless fashion. The mask is worn well: after a period it's possible to forget that it's *David Bowie* doing the narration — which might be the highest compliment in the circumstances. Failing to wear *his* reverential mask today, your reviewer notes some moments of unintentional humour in the whole package: Bowie wrapping his nodes around some of the anthropomorphic voices, the bird's especially, is at least *curious*.

Eugene Normandy modestly takes the solo spot on side two, with Britten's 'Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra' — a different stab at the same idea. Your reviewer doesn't feel himself qualified to comment on the actual quality of the music, but the package looks very classy, so he'll take it as read.

To summarise, cynicism aside, this is a perfect record if you have a young child and wish to give him/her an introduction into classical music, or if you're a 'child of all ages'. The marketing devices make it a must, sadly, for Bowie collectors, who might have been encouraged to explore new areas by listening thereto...

JON SAVAGE

ALAN PARSONS PROJECT
'Pyramid'
(Arista SPART 1054)**

ALAN PARSONS is an *auteur* (if John Savage can say it, so can I); an authoritative and lauded producer who has moved from the console to making his own music. The focus shifts from the artist working away at the bones of a song to the creative technician using the 'creation' of music to rows of machines is at odds with the current idea of rock as basic home-made entertainment, but Parsons is bought and loved by enough people to give any aesthetic appreciation the elbow.

I prefer 'Pyramid' to his last epic, 'I Robot'. 'Pyramid's' concept is a collection of vaguely connected songs and has no narrative line giving it a spurious 'operatic' shape. It's also more musically appealing. The vaguely Egyptain/funereal veneer of the LP comes over as much more palatable that the futuristic MoR-disco of 'Robot'. It also refrains from taking itself too seriously, unlike the futureshock message of 'Robot', by leaving you to decide if pyramid-power is for real and, at times, by sending itself up.

Parsons avoids complex music, preferring to keep with simple harmonies, melodies and rhythms. It follows that the one thing marking 'Pyramid' as different from yer average pop-rock album is his treatment of sound. The opener, 'Voyager', *sounds* like the Babylon scenes in 'Birth Of A Nation' looked, with tolling bells, ritual flute and booming organ chords. The remainder (barring 'Hyper-Gamma-Spaces', Siamese twin to the Floyd's 'On The Run') is straight MoR-rock, dragged from mediocrity by Parsons' expertise and showing a strong allegiance to the likes of Supertramp.

UNdoubtedly, it's coffee-table rock, manufactured to appeal to the widest audience and lacking any musical originality. But give the man his due. Henry Cow he ain't, but in the area of quality easy-listening, you won't find many coming close to Parsons' stylish ephermera.

JOHN GILL